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ASPIRA Board of Directors Meeting
Monday, December 1, 2025
Minutes

Directors Present:

David Rodriguez, Chairman
Sabrina Alicea, Member
Debra Cruz, V.C. Programs
Yolanda Frontany, V.C. Personnel
Rosemary Lugo-Gross, V.C. Development
Marco Morales, Treasurer
James Ramos, Member
Cynthia Yuqui, Secretary
Edgar Lopez, President & CEO

Directors Absent:

Joana Intriago, (Excused)

1. Call to Order

Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm

2. Roll Call

Secretary Yuqui called the roll, and a quorum was determined to be present.

3. Approval of the Agenda

M. Morales made a motion to approve the agenda. Second, by C. Yuqui. Motion prevailed unanimously.

4. Public Comment:

The following members of the public spoke before the board:

- a. Marioxi Yance, parent of ABF student spoke against CTU's efforts to cause charter schools to close.
- b. Carolina Schwartz, social worker at ABF, asked what the board is doing to raise funds for the schools.
- c. Claude Holmes, accused the schools of being mismanaged.

- d. Alvin J. Colon, physics teacher and teacher union member, asked what the board and administration is doing to raise funds and elevate the school's reputation.
- e. Katie Schmidt, social studies teacher at ABF, concerned if ASPIRA will meet payroll and complained that teachers are not invited to meetings with students.
- f. Dr. Cuesta, union member, stated that Aspira is not adequately supporting the school and the community. Recruitment needs to be improved.

5. Approval of the minutes of June 25, 2025 Regular Meeting

M. Morales made a motion to approve the Minutes of June 25, 2025, regular board meeting. Seconded by D. Cruz. Motion prevailed.

6. Chairman Report

Chairman Rodriguez gave his report. Highlights include:

- a. The organization is in a financial crisis with a real risk of the schools closing if immediate funding from CPS is not received.
- b. ASPIRA's financial problems are not caused by mismanagement, but by CPS significantly underfunding charter schools by 17 percent of the total amount that is allocated.
- c. The challenge with fundraising is that corporations and private donors will not fund school operations for schools that are funded by government. They donate for specific programs.
- d. In addition to underfunding the charter schools, CPS has systematically undermined ASPIRA's ability to recruit new students through the **GO CPS** portal. The portal is set up to place ASPIRA and other charter schools at the end of the list of available schools where students don't see them or have limited access to choices. In some instances, ASPIRA was not even listed. This has led to a significant drop in enrollment for the upcoming school year, not just ASPIRA but other charter schools have been affected as well. CPS claims it has fixed the problem, but in fact has not.
- e. Another issue with enrollment is that CPS placed a cap on the number of students that can enroll in an ASPIRA school via the portal.
- f. We continue to advocate for ASPIRA day by day and are reaching out to our elected officials and community leaders to help us save ASPIRA.
- g. CPS has not communicated what the plan is for funding ASPIRA until the end of the school year.

7. CEO Report

CEO Lopez gave his report. Highlights include:

Addressed the recent correspondence from CPS to ASPIRA

- The cash advance provided by CPS is not new or supplemental funding as CPS has implied, but from ASPIRA's own 3rd quarter funding, scheduled to be paid out on 1/26/2026.
- CPS placed restrictions on the management of funds. Current CPS restrictions have caused functional challenges, including the inability to pay essential consultants; inability to pay legal counsel during a period when union negotiations and compliance matters are scheduled for January; delayed ability to respond to routine obligations due to required pre-clearance and layered approvals. These constraints have direct impact on the schools' operations and their ability to meet compliance expectations quickly.
- ASPIRA continues to face significant challenges with enrolment in part due to factors outside our control. The GoCPS system places structural disadvantages to Charter Schools. We experienced a CPS cap of 46 students, which we did not anticipate, causing us to overestimate enrollment projections.
- CPS letter failed to mention that Ashely King, a CPS employee, came to Aspira to conduct a detailed in person financial review where she expressed feeling comfortable in her findings.
- CPS falsely stated that it has already made multiple cash advances, which in fact has made only one advance on June 30, 2025, that was tied to the timing of the 1st quarter allocation.
- The delay in our audit was caused by the last-minute decision of the previous auditor not to conduct the audit. Those timeline adjustments were communicated to CPS in October and again in November based on what we were being told by our new independent auditors.
- CPS inaccurately suggests that requested documents related to the closure of Haugen were turned in late. The documents were delivered on Oct. 31st as requested.
- Aspira's independent audits consistently show no material finding, contradicting CPS's suggestion of weak internal controls.

Aspira will continue to work with CPS and engage the Aspira board to develop and implement a plan for 2026, which includes reviewing financial modeling and enrollment projections, preparing operational and academic restructuring options, and exploring long-term sustainability strategies.

Intensified recruitment efforts include community canvassing, targeted family outreach; updated marketing materials; strengthened feeder network engagement; enhanced digital recruitment campaigns

Current enrollment status as of 12-1-2025:

ABF: 343 students

AEC: 209 students

Aspira is on track to meet the required annual audit submission timeline. We are actively preparing with the following steps completed or underway:

- All financial statements prepared
- Payroll and GL reconciliations completed
- Required audit schedules assembled
- Coordination with external auditors
- Compliance cross-checks completed
- Response framework to CPS questions finalized.

Aspira remains committed to to:

- Full transparency
- Accurate financial reporting
- Strengthening enrollment and community engagement
- Maintaining accountability and compliance
- Working collaboratively with CPS and board of directors
- Ensuring financial and academic stability.

8. Closed Session

**D. Cruz made a motion to enter closed session to consider the following subject:
Litigation and related topics under section 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11)**

Second by C. Yuqui. Motion prevailed unanimously.

9. Return to Open Session

**R. Lugo-Gross made a motion to return to open session. Seconded by D. Cruz.
Motion prevailed unanimously.**

10. Revised Board Calendar

**Y. Frontany made a motion to approve the revised board meeting calendar for
School Year 2025-2026. Second by M. Morales.
Motion prevailed unanimously.**

11. Renewal of Yolanda Frontany's Term

**D. Cruz made a motion to renew Director Yolanda Frontany's term on the Aspira
Board of Directors for two years. Second by C. Yuqui.**

Motion prevailed unanimously.

12. Renewal of Marco Morales' Term

C. Yuqui made a motion to renew Director Marco Morales' term on the Aspira Board of Directors for two years. Second by D. Cruz.

Motion prevailed unanimously.

13. Renewal of Debra Cruz' Term

Y. Frontany made a motion to renew Director Debra Cruz' term on the Aspira Board of Directors for two years. Second by C. Yuqui.

Motion prevailed unanimously.

14. Adjournment

M. Morales made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by R. Lugo-Gross. Motion prevailed unanimously.

Prepared by Sonia Sanchez-Galarza, Board Liaison

Approved on February 2, 2026